1: Wilson E-F (1934-1938) 1951 FNIT Ngonde FNIT
Nyakyusa

ship among the women themselves is, moreover, less developed than in many other African societies.

The isolation and self-sufficiency of the Nyakyusa are diminishing rapidly, for considerable economic and political development followed the 1914–18 war. Coffee (first introduced by the German missionaries) has been developed as a native crop for export, and the cultivation of rice (which had been fostered by the British to provide food for their troops) has expanded. Gold-digging began some fifty miles beyond the borders of the Nyakyusa country, on the Lupa river, and there Nyakyusa men have found both employment as labourers and a ready market for much of their produce, so that by 1936 Rungwe district was exporting goods worth £24,000 annually.[1] In addition to this peasant production there are a small number of European estates producing coffee and tea for export.[2] We estimate the number of Nyakyusa working outside the district as migrant labourers at about 8,000 or 25 per cent of the able-bodied men. There were about 7,000 Nyakyusa men on the Lupa gold-fields in 1937,[3] and a small number on the coffee plantations of Mbozi. These are all within a hundred miles of home; and the Lupa labourers return usually after two or three months' work. A considerable number of Nyakyusa are also at work on the sisal plantations of the coast, and employed as domestic servants or in other semi-skilled jobs through Tanganyika, who remain away for periods up to two or three years. Nyakyusa labourers are regarded by European employers as intelligent and capable of heavy work, but lacking in all the subservient virtues.

The system of Indirect Rule was established in 1926, and a consistent attempt has been made to develop a centralized Native Authority for the Rungwe district. The traditionally sovereign chiefs of the Nyakyusa have been grouped in eleven court districts with one chief as president of the Native Court in each (see Map III); these eleven chiefs, together with the two presidents of the Ndali and Lambya courts, belong to a single federation, with an appeal court and joint Native treasury of its own. In the eleven Native Courts (which are courts of record) most of the

[1] Figure estimated on the basis of information supplied by the courtesy of the Agricultural Officer, Tukuyu.

[2] In 1938 the total area alienated was 26,971 ac.; only 2,200 ac. of this was being worked.

[3] Estimate of the Labour Officer on the [illegible] 4 June 1937.

[Missing in the original – Analyst]

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

traditionally sovereign chiefs are entitled to sit with their village headmen, and assist the president and his village headmen in the hearing of cases. Much of the legal business previously transacted by each chief in his own country is now taken to court (*KwiKoroti*); but the power of village headmen to settle disputes by arbitration in their separate villages is still the basis of the legal system.

Though the Administration has worked through the traditional authorities it has consciously and deliberately modified the traditional system; and, as part of its policy of development, it has established schools, dispensaries, and nurseries for coffee-seedlings and other plants. There are three schools in Rungwe district receiving Government grants: one directly under the Administration, one under the Native Authority, and one a mission school. There are also a great number of 'bush schools', that is, mission village schools under uncertificated teachers giving instruction in the three R's and in religion. Over 19,000 children (12·6 per cent of the population served) are enrolled in the various schools; but 96 per cent of these are in 'bush schools', many of whom never learn even to read and write.

The structure of Nyakyusa society has been further complicated by the conversion of a substantial minority (16 per cent in 1938)[1] of the people to Christianity. The Christians form a group with values radically different from those of the pagans, on whom they react in innumerable ways.[2] The growth of this diversity in the society is a direct effect of its diminishing isolation.

To treat of Nyakyusa villages as if missions, or the Administration, or migrant labour and coffee export did not exist would simplify, but distort our analysis. We have therefore included some account of the differences in behaviour between pagan and Christian, of the effects of centralization on the position of village headmen, and of the influence of trade and migration on economic co-operation in the village. A discussion of the organization of schools and Christian congregations; of the development of courts of record, and 'court districts'; of the relation between

[1] Calculated from figures supplied by the courtesy of the missions and the independent African Churches working in the district.

[2] Moslems are very few and they have little influence on the community as a whole. These few are mostly Swahili traders, Ngoni settlers, or soldiers of the K.A.R. from Nyasaland. We heard of only two or three Nyakyusa who had turned Moslem.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

abakulumba) and their eldest sons are his two heirs in the chieftainship. Young girls, daughters of neighbouring chiefs, are carried off with a show of force from their fathers' homes, by the young chief's men, who themselves later contribute to the herd of cows sent to regularize the position. The two great wives are thus married not solely with the cows of their husband, but also with those of the men whose sons their sons will one day rule. The duty of arranging the match lies with the village headmen of the old chief, and it is said that they are often guided in their choice by dreams.

The girls who are carried off are just about to reach puberty, and they stay at the house of one of the men of the old chief until their periods begin. When both have reached puberty they are initiated, not at their fathers' houses, as are ordinary girls, but in the country of their husband, and both together. At their initiation the old men and women of the country (contemporaries of the old retiring chief) play the part normally played by a girl's parents and their neighbours, while the young chief and his men take the usual part of a husband and his friends. And then, after the ceremonies are over, the two girls are given to the young chief as his wives. Houses are built for them separately, i.e. in the senior age-village of the new chiefdom for the first wife, in the next senior village for the second wife; and in this separation of dwelling place is already apparent the future division of the chiefdom between their sons.

Within the chiefdom, and among the wives and children of the chief two 'sides' (*isibafu*) are recognized. Usually, in each country there are, at its beginning, at least two age-villages and half the wives of the chief on either side. This distinction of two sides is important in succession, a son from each side eventually inheriting half the country.

From the time of the 'coming out' of the two young chiefs till the day of their own father's death there exists between him and them a delicate balance of prestige and power. Each of the three, traditionally, has judicial authority in his own age-villages, but appeals in difficult cases may be taken from either of the young chiefs and their village headmen to the old chief and his village headmen, while the religious duties of chieftainship are exercised entirely by the old chief. But in the old days it was the young chief who fought and led men. 'Young chiefs used to lead their

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

men to funerals in other countries and start a fight, and raid cattle. The old chief would say: "I am too old to lead people to war and to funerals, and to feed men, I have no cattle, you have the power to do these things now." It was the lusty young men (*abatubwa*) who fought, not the old men.'

Formerly this transition period rarely lasted long, for the old chief usually died shortly after the 'coming out' of his sons. Success in war and probably also the fertility of the country were believed to be dependent upon the virility of the chief. As one informant put it: 'The old chiefs died because there was war: the people would complain of an old chief saying: "He is too old, when we fight we are beaten, he had better die. Perhaps the young chief will help us." ' The old chief's death was commonly interpreted as due to 'the breath' (*vide infra*, p. 101) of his people who loved his sons rather than himself, but we have evidence that chiefs were sometimes ceremonially strangled by their village headmen. Nowadays many chiefs survive for years after the 'coming out' of their sons, and relations between the generations are consequently complicated, as we shall see later.

At the death of the old chief control of the villages of old men passes to the two young chiefs and their village headmen, half to each side. Village headmen of the old chief, relinquishing most of their secular functions to their successors, enter upon new religious duties as priests in the sacrifices to the chief who has just died, and this priesthood they hand on to their sons. The dead chief's full brother is still the religious head of both chiefdoms, but all the secular functions are now exercised by the young chiefs, each in his own country. And the religious functions also fall to them when all their father's full brothers are dead.

The 'coming out' ceremony has been described in some detail, for it is the occasion when chiefdoms and villages are formally established, and the future relations between them are made clear. The splitting of the old chiefdom into two independent halves; the division of every new chiefdom into two sides, each under a senior headman; the boundaries, membership, and relations of the age-villages within each side—all are defined at this ceremony. In the catching-hold of the village headmen, and in the making of fire, the relative status of leaders and villages and the membership of each village are shown. In the planting of the ritual trees on the boundary between the two sides of the country, and

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

i. Constitutional form

Two other negative points are worth noting. First, the Nyakyusa fought among themselves and honoured a brave warrior, but they never developed a military kingdom, nor did they regard battle as the chief end of man. Emphasis on the value of war is not, then, a necessary concomitant of a developed age-organization, as a study of the Masai, Zulu, Swazi, and Pedi material might suggest. Secondly, the constitutional division of a chiefdom once every generation is not dependent upon the age-village organization, for such a division was common enough among the southern Nguni whose age-organizations were of relatively small importance. Among the Pondo and Xhosa the 'great son' and the 'right-hand son' of a chief very often both became independent; the main condition of their separation and independence being that there should be ample land in which they might live, each with his own followers.[1] Nyakyusa chiefdoms could divide in each generation because the Nyakyusa were an expanding population in relatively empty country.

j. Necessary conditions of age-villages

The limitations of the connections we have attempted to show must be realized. None of the characteristics cited are *correlates* of age-villages, for in each case either the age-villages could exist without them, or they could exist without age-villages: e.g. fathers- and daughters-in-law could not avoid one another completely if they lived in the same village, but the separate villages in which they live need not necessarily be age-villages; age-villages might be established though father- and daughter-in-law did not avoid one another; and so on. We claim only that these characteristics of Nyakyusa society which have been cited *partly* determine, and are themselves partly determined by, the age-village organization.

There are, however, certain other characteristics of Nyakyusa society without which age-villages such as we have described could not exist at all. The first of these is the redistribution of

[1] J. H. Soga, *Ama-Xosa Life and Customs*, pp. 25–29; M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, pp. 379–80.

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

692 Many cases were of course decided by the common people among themselves, others by their great commoners, and others by the local chiefs sitting with their great commoners. Although there was no centralized judicial system, the political hierarchy of chiefdoms sometimes could be used to obtain redress in the case of a quarrel between men of different chiefdoms. The weakness of the system is indicated by the fact that restitution for wrong done was often obtained by the method of capturing a hostage.[1]

681 Witchcraft was punished by death. An adulterer, if caught, was killed by the husband. Deliberate murder required compensation up to ten head of cattle and the transfer of a woman, followed by a feast of reconciliation. If the murderer could not be caught a blood feud would be started, ending with a feast of formal reconciliation under the guidance of a diviner. Accidental homicide required compensation, but no feast of reconciliation, as there had been no malice. A cattle-thief caught red-handed might be killed on the spot; arson was settled by payment of compensation.[2]

MODERN GOVERNMENT

622 (*a*) *Ngonde*. The British Government in Nyasaland at first applied the system of direct rule. Chiefs and nobles were recognized as 'village' or 'principal' headmen,
●642 performing executive duties for the Administration. The Kyungu was one of the
643 'principal' headmen, but was not recognized as Paramount. In 1924 the system was modified by the setting up of advisory councils in association with the headmen and the District Resident. The members of the councils were nominated and removable by the Government, and there was no intention of reviving tribal government.

In 1933 the system of Indirect Rule was introduced. The Kyungu was recognized as paramount chief, with an appeal court and five sub-chiefs under him. Of these, one, Kilupula, was over the northern part of the Ngonde plain, another ruled the Lambya in the extreme north-west, and the three others were distant territorial nobles ruling groups of alien stock in the hills. The nobles of Ngonde, with twelve prominent nobles and six other assessors, were recognized as members of the Kyungu's court and given nominal salaries. Those of the great chiefs of Ngonde who were not made sub-chiefs were officially termed 'important' headmen, and given nominal salaries. The other chiefs and territorial nobles were still termed 'village' headmen as before 1933. The Kyungu and the five sub-chiefs were each given an area and a court for the area. Village and important headmen could arbitrate in small cases but had no power to execute judgements. That power belonged to the courts alone. The Kyungu's court was also a court of appeal for the whole of Ngonde. A Native Treasury was established, into which one-twelfth of the tax was paid, but this was almost entirely expended on personal emoluments.

The full traditional constitution cannot be revived, as the religious beliefs which supported it have been superseded. Forty-five per cent. of the population profess Christianity, and even the belief in witchcraft, which operated in certain cases as a constitutional check, is less persistent than before. The native rulers are no longer believed to control the rain and the health and fertility of their people, so they stand or fall by the performance of their secular duties alone. Since the Kyungu has come out of religious seclusion the nobles of Ngonde are relegated to advisory status. The secularization of the constitution tends in this respect to make it more autocratic, both

[1] Wilson, 5, 1939, p. 48–59.

[2] Mackenzie, 1925, pp. 82–90.

4: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FN17 Ngonde FN17

622 in the relations between the Kyungu and the nobles, and in those between the local chiefs and their great commoners. On the other hand, there has been a reversal in the
642 relative wealth of commoners and chiefs. The latter have had small salaries substituted for the proceeds of the ivory trade, food tribute, and the booty of war. The decline of
643 polygyny has also reduced the relative wealth of the chiefs. The Kyungu's total official salary in 1937 was £72, and the salaries of sub-chiefs from £4. 10*s.* to £12 per annum. The nobles of Ngonde were paid from 10*s.* to 15*s.* per annum except Mulwa, who got 30*s.* These salaries do not permit of lavish entertainment and gifts to subordinates, and the rulers suffer a consequent loss of prestige. Each village headman is allowed 3*d.* in the tax paid by every adult male subject, and, in addition, the 'important' headmen (former great chiefs) receive subsidies averaging about 10*s.* per annum. These payments have replaced the traditional right to requisition food. Commoners are frequently richer than their rulers. The head clerk in the Boma got £52 in 1937, and fifty-three other government employees got £12 or more. Young men from the goldmines and native Christian ministers now earn more than do the former great chiefs.

By using his private fortune the present Kyungu has been able to maintain the prestige of his office. He revived the *milasa*, hoeing custom, in 1927 on a new basis. To each chief who hoed for him he presented a cow, bought out of the proceeds of the sale of the produce of their labours. The *milasa* profit also enabled him to buy cloth for funeral gifts, a custom which he extended considerably, giving cloths not only at the death of the chiefs, but also to everyone who dies in his part of the plain of Ngonde. The present constitution of Ngonde is more autocratic and more centralized than the old, and thanks to his wealth the Kyungu's secular power is greater than that of his predecessors, in relation to the nobles of Ngonde, and to the chiefs and territorial nobles.

The 'coming out' has ceased since 1913, owing to the smallness of all the present chiefdoms, and the impossibility of finding enough land and followers for two successors to any local chief. Each chief is now succeeded by a brother or one son only. Subjects are still free to move away from the area of an unpopular headmen, thereby reducing his salary by 3*d.* per annum.[1] Although the Nyasaland–Tanganyika boundary cuts his sphere of influence, the Kyungu is still often consulted on tribal affairs across the border.[2]

622 (*b*) *Nyakyusa.* The government of Tanganyika Territory has grouped the 100 or so traditionally independent chiefs into eleven court districts, with one chief as President
642 of the Native Court in each. These eleven chiefs, together with the two presidents of the Ndali and Lambya courts, are federated, and have an appeal court and joint Native Treasury of their own. In the eleven native courts most of the traditionally sovereign chiefs are entitled to sit with their great commoners, and assist the President and his great commoners in the hearing of cases. The bulk of the legal business previously transacted by each chief in his own country is now taken to court, but the power of the great commoners to settle disputes by arbitration in their separate villages is still the basis of the legal system. A poll tax, fixed at 9*s.* per annum (1938) for adult males, was introduced, and chiefs are paid small salaries, ranging from 5*s.*, 10*s.*, or 20*s.* a month for ordinary chiefs, to 80*s.* or 100*s.* a month for court presidents.[3]

[1] Wilson, 3, 1939, pp. 69–85.
[2] *Native Affairs Report*, 1933, p. 6.
[3] Wilson, 3, 1938, p. 15.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

114 121 642 ● My wife and I were engaged in researches among the Nyakyusa from September 1934 to January 1938; and our informants constantly told us of the general similarity between their own customs and those of the Ngonde plain. They made it clear, however, that while they and the men of the Ngonde plain shared an otherwise almost identical culture they yet differed markedly in their political systems. The Nyakyusa, when the Europeans reached them, were organized in small independent chiefdoms, the people of Ngonde possessed a paramount chief, the Kyungu. More recently, among the Nyakyusa, a sustained attempt by the Tanganyika Administration to set up two paramount chiefs had failed; in Ngonde, on the other hand, where the Kyungu's supremacy had, until recently, been officially unrecognized by the Nyasaland Administration, his position seemed to be quite secure. The contrast was an interesting one and demanded investigation. Nor was this the only difference between the Nyakyusa political system and that of Ngonde; besides a paramount chief Ngonde possessed a group of hereditary nobles (*amakambala*) which was apparently quite unparalleled among the Nyakyusa.

114 121 642 171 So in July 1937 we crossed the Songwe and spent some time in Ngonde studying these differences. Our visit confirmed the fact that the traditional culture and social system of the Ngonde plain was in almost all respects identical with that of the Nyakyusa. The patrilineal kinship organization with marriage by cattle, the age-villages each with its great-commoner or headman (*ukifumu*), the little chiefdoms each consisting of a group of age-villages united under a hereditary chief (*umalafyale*), all were there.[1] The descriptions we were given of the traditional rituals at death, at girls' puberty, at the birth of twins and at the "coming out" of young chiefs seemed to be identical in general significance and almost identical in detail with the rituals we knew among the Nyakyusa. Language also was similar, though here the similarity had been less close in former times. And yet there were the two great differences: at the apex of the political system of Ngonde was the Kyungu, while a group of hereditary nobles formed an integral part of it. Again and again our informants confirmed this general identity, these specific differences: "Everything is just the same among us as among the Nyakyusa, only in the case of the Kyungu and his nobles (*amakambala*) is there any dissimilarity." How then was this dissimilarity to be accounted for?

[1] This social system is discussed in the first paper of this series—*The Land Rights of Individuals among the Nyakyusa* (1938), and also in papers contributed to *Bantu Studies*, one in September 1936—"An Introduction to Nyakyusa Society," another in April 1939—"Nyakyusa Burial Conventions."

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

It is unusual for a sociologist to find such a simple problem for analysis as this and it was not long before the answer was plain. The Nyakyusa, until a few decades before the coming of the Europeans, had been largely isolated from any vigorous external contacts; Ngonde, on the other hand, had been effectively related to the outside world for generations. The Nyakyusa actually possessed in the Lwembes, the hereditary chiefs of Lubaga, a line of spiritual paramounts or high priests, whose religious functions were remarkably similar to those of the Kyungus in Ngonde; but, poor and isolated as they were, they had never developed any secular paramountcy at all. The reasons for the greater elaboration of the traditional political system of Ngonde were to be found above all in the ivory trade and in the constant influx of immigrant groups.

And it further became clear that the prestige which the present Kyungu enjoys in the changed conditions to-day is due in large part to his having followed the mercantile traditions of his predecessors, mastered the business methods of the Scots, made a fortune, and then kept up his position out of his own private means.

2. *THE CHRONICLE OF NGONDE (TO 1875).*

In studying the present constitution of Ngonde and the profound changes now taking place in it, we cannot find any point of time at which the process of change began. In its present radical form social change in Ngonde arises from the ferment of a host of new social conditions imported by European missionaries, traders and Government officials. But the Arabs also brought change to Ngonde and before the Arabs the Ngoni, while before the coming of the Ngoni there is evidence to suggest that changes had arisen, on more than one occasion, in the normal behaviour of the men of Ngonde which were stimulated, not by any new contacts with the outside world, but simply by accidents of their own internal history. Social change in Ngonde, as far as we can see, has always been going on.

In this section the political history of Ngonde is described in outline from the its beginnings to the coming of the Europeans in 1875, in so far as it can be recovered from the oral tradition. In later sections a systematic analysis is attempted, first of the constitution of Ngonde just prior to that date, and then of the changes in it which have since taken place.

(a) *THE EARLY KYUNGUS.*

It is generally agreed that the ancestors of the Kyungus, the present hereditary chiefs of Ngonde, came from the Livingstone Mountains in

[The dissimilarity between the Ngonde AND the Nyakyusa political systems. — ANALYST]

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

necessarily have followed from them, had modern conditions been different. The evidence is inconclusive.

Now not all territorial nobles in the Ngonde plain have been supplanted by "the sons of the Kyungus" even to-day; while in the hills inland they have mostly retained their power. And so in discussing the political system of Ngonde under the middle Kyungus, it is necessary to distinguish carefully between four different kinds of political unit: (1) the chiefdoms in the plain, each ruled by a hereditary chief related to the Kyungu; (2) the fiefs (if I may adapt this word from a feudal to a primitive context) in the plain, ruled by hereditary nobles unrelated to the Kyungu; (3) the fiefs in the hills inland, also ruled by hereditary nobles, but differing in many ways from the fiefs in the plain, and (4) the chiefdoms of the houses of Nyondo and Kameme in the hills.

This paper is mainly concerned with chiefdoms and fiefs of the plain. There each of the chiefdoms consisted, as among the Nyakyusa, of a group of age-villages, older and younger men living apart with their own contemporaries. At the head of each village was a headman, or great-commoner (*ulifumu*) chosen for life from among the villagers by the chief and the great-commoners (*amafumu*) of the senior villages of the chiefdom. Except in the case of very small chiefdoms each chief was succeeded by two or more sons who divided the villages among them. The transference of power from the old chief to his sons normally began in his lifetime at the "coming out" (*wousoka*) when they were formally shown to the country as chiefs and magically treated. The constitution of every chiefdom was that of limited monarchy, for the chief was dependent upon his great-commoners, who advised and, in many ways, controlled him. In the status of chief and great-commoners religious elements played an important part.

But, whereas among the Nyakyusa each chiefdom, save the very small ones, was, in secular matters, quite independent of its neighbours and each chief was a sovereign, in Ngonde, on the other hand, the wealth of the Kyungu and the nobles of Ngonde made them the apex of a political hierarchy. And thus, while among the Nyakyusa the senior of two brother chiefs could only command his junior in religious matters, when they sacrificed to their common father's spirit, in Ngonde he could occasionally command him in other ways also, he could, for example, summon him to war or to hoe,[1] and he had a certain slight judicial authority.[2] Of two brother chiefs the junior was subordinate to the senior; in each of the great houses all other chiefs were subordinate to the head of the house, the great chief with a hereditary title;

[1] Vide infra sections 4 and 6.
[2] Vide infra section 5.

[text continues on p. 24]

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

173
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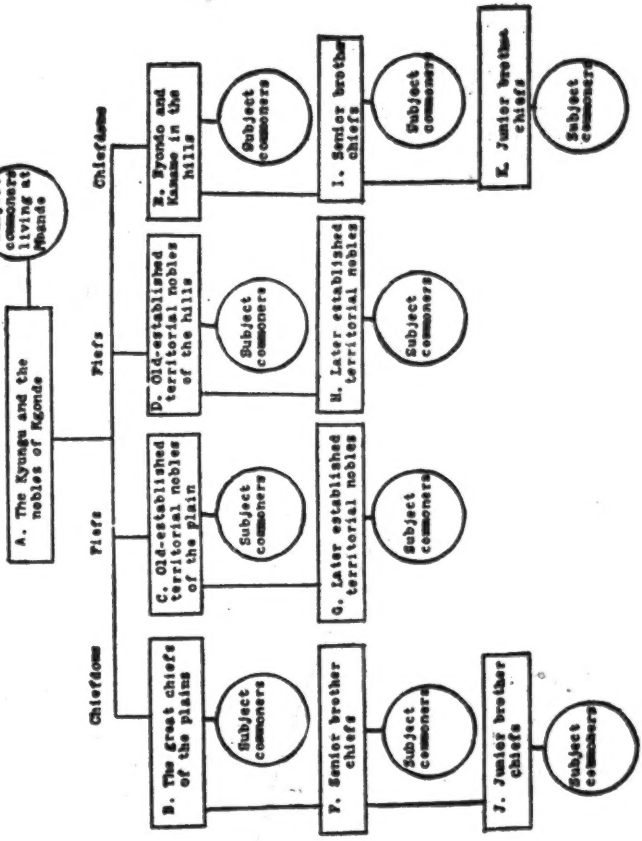
THE CONSTITUTION OF NGONDE IN THE MIDDLE PERIOD



6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

642 622 643 565 the great chiefs themselves were subordinate to Kyungu. But every ruling chief right up the scale, except the Kyungu himself, had also his own great-commoners and people directly subordinate to him. Moreover the subordination of some chiefs to others and of all to Mbande was a very different thing from the subordination of authorities in a civilized state. It was still above all a religious and ceremonial subordination, but in matters of secular justice and administration there was a very large measure of local autonomy.

Within the chiefdom the organization of families and villages was more or less[1] the same as that described in the first paper of this series, and need not be further described here.

642 643 565 Among the fiefs of the plain there was another hierarchy, depending not upon seniority of birth but upon priority of arrival in Ngonde. For each important immigrant who entered the country with followers of his own went first to an already established territorial noble, not straight to Mbande; and it was the already established noble, who then acted as his sponsor, took him to Mbande and told the nobles of Ngonde and the Kyungu of his request for land. The normal procedure then was for the nobles of Ngonde to be sent by the Kyungu to arrange with his sponsor where to settle him. And thereafter he ranked, at least for ceremonial purposes, as his sponsor's junior. Thus the territorial noble Kasyombe was junior to his sponsor Mwenekibuta, and so on. But no ruling noble was subordinate to any chief save the Kyungu. The nobles, both territorial and of Ngonde, describe themselves as "the great-commoners (*amafumu*) of the Kyungu," likening the relationship of the fiefs and the Kyungu to that of the villages of a single chiefdom and their chief.

642 565 The organization of each single fief seems to have resembled in many ways that of a small chiefdom, each was divided into at least two age-villages, so that old men and their sons should live separately; for it was taboo in all the Ngonde plain, as among the Nyakyusa, for father and daughter-in-law ever to meet. Kinship, however, was more emphasized as a reason for living together than in the chiefdoms, and we are told that the inhabitants of the fiefs were usually related, either as kinsmen or affines, to the territorial noble concerned; while the age-villages of a fief had no great-commoners at their head. Otherwise the customs which obtained in the plain, both in the fiefs and the chiefdoms, were, on the whole, homogeneous.

Each of the nobles of Ngonde had a few subject commoners of his own living at Mbande with him, divided up into two age-villages; so

[1] The climatic difference determines certain differences in the system of land-tenure of Ngonde and of the Nyakyusa, but of these we have made no study.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

that the organization of Mbande may be described either as a group of small fiefs clustered together or as the capital chiefdom of the Kyungu, in which the nobles of Ngonde acted as the great commoners, each in two small age-villages.

Besides the nobles of Ngonde and their own followers there lived at Mbande men called *valukuta*, who acted as the personal messengers and police of the Kyungu. They were not hereditary officials but chosen for their speed by the nobles of Ngonde, who also gave them their orders. Anyone might become a messenger, the son of a chief, or of a commoner, or even a slave.

Of the customs of the hill fiefs and of the chiefdom, of the houses of Nyondo and Kameme we know very little; but it is certain that in many of them different dialects were spoken from that of the plain and that their inhabitants called themselves (as they still do to-day) Sukwa, Wenya, Lambya, and so on, rather than "men of Ngonde." And these upland groups were much more loosely attached[1] to the central power at Mbande than were the people of the plain.

There is some evidence to show that, even in the early period, the the nobles of Ngonde did not always take the most immediate heir of a dead Kyungu to succeed him; during the middle period it is certain that they did not. The Kyungu had to be taken from the royal family but, within limits, the most suitable man might be chosen. And with the increase in the numbers of the chiefs the area of selection grew constantly wider. The constitutional metheds of selection will be discussed in section five.

(d) *THE MIDDLE KYUNGUS: CIVIL WARS.*

We must now turn to the rivalry between the chiefs of Ngelenge and Ngana. "Mwangonde begot Kalonga, Mpeta,[2] and Mwansele. And they, when they grew up, quarrelled with the sons of Kasyombe: 'Let them move further off, they are only commoners, we object to their proximity!' So they made war on them and drove them fleeing out of Ngana with only a few men. Before this war began their father Mwangonde had forbidden them to fight and commanded them to be friends." We notice here a point, which will be discussed later in section five, that the Kyungus, though not themselves involved in the civil wars, yet had little or no power to keep the peace.

"Then the sons of Kasyombe went to the Ndali to make allies of them and they returned together and fought the sons of Mwangonde

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[1] cf. Section 5.
[2] Mpeta (*vide infra*) later took the name of Mwakasungula.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

These twin religious powers of the great-commoners in relation to their chief (or of the nobles of Ngonde in relation to the Kyungu) were important for the balance of the constitution, for they provided a most effective check upon the actions of the chiefs. If a chief kept within the bounds of constitutional usage then any illness that he had would be attributed by the diviners to some such cause, as the infidelity of his wives or the breach of a taboo; but if he broke some constitutional usage then that would be taken to be the cause of his next illness; the great-commoners, it would be held, were angry and so had made him ill.

It is hardly necessary to stress the local and individual autonomy implicit in the faith in witchcraft. Not only were the great-commoners as a group believed to have an irresistible power through their witchcraft over their chief, but so were the great-commoner and the leading witches of every village believed to have an irresistible power over other individuals within that village. And in both cases their powers were strictly limited, save exceptionally, by the bounds of chiefdom or village. Moreover witches did not always act as a group, an individual witch might maliciously cause another individual to fall ill. In all this the political hierarchy was irrelevant. But it was not irrelevant in dealing with accusations of malicious witchcraft; there proof rested with the poison ordeal and a journey had to be made to a great chief or a leading noble.

4. *ECONOMIC ELEMENTS (MIDDLE PERIOD).*

We have suggested in the previous section that the traditional religious paramountcy of the Kyungu and his nobles of Ngonde was an important factor of their secular power. But comparison with the Nyakyusa shows us that their control of wealth was equally important. The religious paramountcy furnished a mould into which the stiffening stream of wealth could run and there be minted into the form of sovereignty. Much of the wealth which reached Mbande did not stay there; it was passed back piecemeal to the local rulers of Ngonde, stamped with the divine impress of the Kyungu.

(a) *THE INCOME OF MBANDE AND OTHER AUTHORITIES.*

Now the traditional income of Mbande consisted of ivory, food, labour, slaves and cattle. Of ivory the Kyungu had a semi-monopoly in the plain and received tribute from the territorial nobles in the hills. Food was brought to him by the chiefs and territorial nobles of the plain, who also, with their men, hoed his public gardens (*imilasa*). Slaves and cattle accrued to him from tribal wars and from his offending

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

and wealth." Once again we see how closely connected were the religious powers of the Kyungu with his wealth.

And the military authority of Mbande, like that of the lesser rulers, was correlated both as cause and as effect with the other factors of its general political status. The central power rested in part on its military functions : it was a tribal rallying point for defence against alien attacks, together with the hierarchy which depended upon it, it provided the necessary large-scale organization for military success, its religious powers were never more valued than in wartime, while victory brought wealth and prestige both to the Kyungu and his subordinates. But, as comparison with the Nyakyusa shows,[1] it was only the flow of wealth up and down the hierarchy, in combination with the religious functions of Mbande, that made this large-scale military organization possible.

(c) *WARFARE AND AUTONOMY.*

Now warfare is, at one and the same time, an example of order and of disorder in human society. By social order I mean the systematic overcoming of lesser autonomies within existing wider groups : the overcoming of individual autonomy within the family and the local community, the overcoming of family, local and other autonomies within the tribe or state, the overcoming of tribal and state autonomies within still wider groups. By social disorder I mean the temporary overcoming by a lesser autonomy of the forces of some existing wider group. Legal procedure is one of most obvious examples of order, crime is one of the most obvious examples of disorder.

But warfare falls between these two extremes. Seldom are lesser autonomies so completely overcome as they are within a group at war, never is the autonomy of that group more clearly dominant over the forces making for a wider order. And it is of fundamental importance for the understanding of any social field to see which groups within it have both sufficient unity and sufficient autonomy to engage in recurrent warfare with one another. The size of the groups which go to war is one of the marks by which we distinguish primitive from civilized societies ——the smaller the warring groups the more primitive the society.

Now the recurrent civil wars of Ngonde in the middle period of its history show us that, beneath its hierarchical facade, it was a society of the same kind as that of the Nyakyusa across the Songwe; the centralized political organization was too weak permanently to overcome the local autonomies of village, fief and chiefdom. It is true that the mercantile divinity of Mbande gave sufficient unity to Ngonde to enable it to fight as

[1] *Vide infra p. 64.*

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

721 642 a whole against the Bemba and the Ngoni, and that the poverty-stricken divinity of Lubaga was unable to do this for the Nyakyusa ;[1] but neither of them gave their people any high degree of unity among themselves.

For, while in both cases the hierarchical organization touched the common people in its religious and ceremonial aspects, in neither case did it much affect their everyday actions. In Ngonde, as we have seen, the wealth of the Kyungu, which he derived from the ivory trade, enabled him and his nobles of Ngonde to bind the other chiefs and nobles to him, in a way that the Lwembe and his hereditary priests could not do across the Songwe. But this wealth only touched the common people slightly and did not much alter the economic organization of the local groups. Nor had Ngonde any other common activities save tribal wars, religious rituals, and the hoeing of the *milasa*.

Horizontal as well as vertical relations must bind social groups together if their autonomy is to be permanently overcome, and in Ngonde, no less than among the Nyakyusa, the horizontal relations between the local groups were weak ; while the religious seclusion of the Kyungus weakened the vertical relations also. The constitution of Ngonde consisted of a number of small and primitive local groups, all firmly attached to Mbande, but each one capable of swinging free[2] and of breaking the tenuous horizontal bonds that joined them among themselves.

Now a distinction must be made between these civil wars and the tribal wars with the Bemba and Ngoni. The civil wars point us to the disorder of Ngonde, a disorder which existed in spite of unifying factors ; the tribal wars point us to lack of order which was hardly opposed by any unifying factors at all. No doubt there were occasional peaceful contacts between Ngonde and these other tribes, but they were clearly very slight indeed.

7. *POLITICAL CEREMONIAL.*

643 644 In every relationship of life there is some ceremonial expression of feeling. And towards the Kyungus of the middle period their subjects frequently expressed the feelings of worship and terror appropriate to an irascible divinity.

" At Mbande the nobles of Ngonde would sit round praising the Kyungu ; the drums went ' *kindé ! kindé !* ' And they would praise him in antiphony : ' O Kyungu !—Great Father ! Great Father !—

[1] The Nyakyusa were attacked both by Sango and Ngoni but no tribal alliance was formed to meet these attacks.

[2] In the case of the chiefdoms this metaphor must be qualified by the intervention of the great chiefs between the local chiefdoms and Mbande, and the occasional unifying effect of this fact upon whole groups of chiefdoms.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

to appoint a regent and, with the consent of the nobles of Ngonde and of Mwangalaba himself, Peter was appointed ; and in 1932 he succeeded his brother as the Kyungu. He is still the Kyungu to-day. Both before and after his succession he has used his private fortune without stint to maintain his public position ; and the historical accident of his personal ability and wealth has played a very large part in shaping the course of the political and social revolution though which Ngonde is passing.

It is Peter who has completed the emergence of the Kyungus from their religious seclusion at Mbande. He has, in the first place, abandoned all claims to divinity and, with them, all interest in the traditional prayers and sacrifices to his ancestors which the nobles of Ngonde still occasionally undertake. And in the second place, he has built his capital, not at Mbande with the nobles of Ngonde, but at Bwiba, half way between Mbande and the Government Boma at Karonga—a position symbolic of the new age.

The Government of the Protectorate at first applied a system of direct rule. In Ngonde most of the chiefs and ruling nobles were designated either as " Village " or as " Principal Headmen " and officially allowed to exercise executive duties. It appears that traditional rulers only were selected, though, theoretically, anyone at all might have been. The " Principal Headmen " included the Kyungu but he was not recognized as paramount over the others. " In 1924 certain modifications were made in their position, but it was officially stated ' that the new system is no way intended to revivify or perpetuate governance by Native chiefs.' Under the 1924 system ' Village ' and ' Principal Headmen ' still had executive duties on behalf of Government, but no authority to administer their people in their own right."[1] With the appointed headmen councils were associated consisting of " members nominated and removeable by the Government," and a similar district council was set up " to advise the District Resident in such matters as may come before him."

But in 1933 the system was changed to one of " Indirect Rule " or " Local Self-Government," by which the traditional political institutions of Ngonde were taken as the basis of administration. The Kyungu was now recognised as " Paramount Chief,"[2] with an appeal court and with five " Sub-chiefs "[3] under him. Of these five Kilupula was one of the

[1] The quotations in this paragraph are taken from L. P. Mair's *Native Policies in Africa* pages 114-116.

[2] In order to avoid confusion between traditional and modern titles I shall, from now on, use the former without quotation marks, the latter with them.

[3] These five had all been " Principal Headmen " under the previous ordinance. Since our visit Kalonga, the senior great chief of Ngoniland, has also been made a " Sub-chief."

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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great chiefs of Ngana, three others (Mwenemisuku, Mwenewenya, and Nthalile) were distant territorial nobles who ruled groups of alien stock in the hills, while the last, Nyondo, who was, we remember, traditionally related to the Kyungu, ruled the Lambya group in the extreme north west. The nobles of Ngonde, together with twelve prominent territorial nobles and six other assessors, were recognised as members of the Kyungu's court and given nominal salaries. Those of the great chiefs of Ngonde who were not made "Sub-chiefs" in the new regime were now officially termed "Important Headmen," and given nominal salaries also. The other chiefs and those territorial nobles who had men of their own under them were still termed "Village Headmen" as they were before 1933.

The Kyungu and the five "Sub-chiefs" each had an area allotted to him, and each was given a court for his area. "Village" and "Important Headmen" might arbitrate in small cases, but had no power to execute judgments; that power belonged to the courts alone. Thus the Ngonde plain was split up into the two areas of the Kyungu (in the south) and of Kilupula (in the north). The Kyungu's court was both a court of first instance for his own area and also a court of appeal for the whole of Ngonde.

The modern title "Village Headman," seems at first to be a particularly confusing one since its bearer rules, not a village, but either a chiefdom or a fief which is itself sub-divided into age-villages. Further in the case of chiefdoms, unless they are very small, each age-village has its own great-commoner; and it is he who is the traditional village headman. But the confusion seems more natural when we realise the number of very small chiefdoms and fiefs which have now come into being by the continual sub-division of the former and the gradual shrinkage of the latter. There are some ruling chiefs and nobles to-day, still recognised as such, who have only half-a-dozen adult male tax payers under them. And it takes a pedantic anthropologist to see in such a group *two* age-villages! It is true that one does find the two or three old men in it still building a little apart from the three or four young ones, but most likely they are now all Christians and no longer observe the father-daughter-in-law taboos; for all practical purposes they constitute but one village-group. In the larger chiefdoms, however, the traditional articulation into age-villages each under its own great-commoner, still survives as a living fact.

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Like the Nyakyusa, but unlike many other Central African peoples, the people of Ngonde have a fairly easy adjustment to make to modern economic conditions. It is true that a large proportion of the able-bodied men, estimated by the District Commissioner in 1937 to be 25%, are now

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

always away, but the great majority of these go to the nearby Lupa Gold Fields in Tanganyika and return home regularly after short periods of three or four months at work there. Nor are they by any means solely dependent upon the sale of their labour for the money which is now necessary to them. Cotton and a certain amount of coffee, rice, beans, maize and beeswax are now being produced in Ngonde for sale to the outside world. Of cotton, the most important economic crop of this district, ninety tons were exported in 1936 and brought in, for distribution among the thousand men who had planted it, about a thousand pounds.

The question of the ultimate title to the land of Ngonde at various times since the coming of the Europeans has been the subject of dispute; but in actual fact only a little was ever alienated to European firms or individuals. These alienations were followed, in some cases, by a shifting of the African population off the land taken up, but not on any large scale. And since 1933 Native rights have been secured by law. There are now only three or four small estates occupied by Europeans in Ngonde.

In the constitutional sphere, again, a Native treasury has been set up into which one twelfth of the tax money is paid; but as this money is almost entirely used up in personal emoluments, the new treasury has so far little significance.

The whole scale and perspective of life is now changed. Ngonde is no longer a world in itself but a tiny province in a great empire. The Kyungu is no longer either a god or a sovereign, but a little secular chief visibly supported and controlled by the Nyasaland Government. Nearly half his people profess Christianity. A quarter of his young men are always outside Ngonde working for wages. Mission education in local schools and at the neighbouring central station of Livingstonia, opens to increasing numbers each year the knowledge of a vast new world. The primitive Ngonde was a world of personal relationships; only rarely were people much affected by the behaviour of any save their personal acquaintances. But to-day impersonal relationships are all-important in Ngonde; world markets, imperial policies and world history in general largely determine the behaviour of its people.

9. *THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION OF NGONDE.*

(a) *CHANGE AND CONTINUITY.*

The constitution of Ngonde in the middle period of its history consisted of a mercantile divinity superimposed on a number of relatively autonomous local groups. The central power was mainly determined by the two factors of divine kingship and the ivory trade: the local autonomy was mainly determined by the absence of any large number of

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

642 permanent social relationships beyond the local groups of chiefdom and fief, and by the religious seclusion of the Kyungus. Now every one of these factors has to-day ceased to operate. And it is worth dwelling on this, for it follows that the constitution of the middle period has ceased to exist and something radically different has been developed in its place. Divine kingship and the ivory trade are dead, a host of complex and permanent relationships now covers Ngonde and links it to the outside world, the Kyungu rules his people in person, under Government. And the continuity which is aimed at by a policy of "indirect rule" is thus only possible in Ngonde to a very limited extent.

On the other hand, as some continuity is inevitable even through the most radical political change, so an acceptance by the Government of that inevitability is itself a factor of political order. It is far easier to rule Ngonde to-day through the Kyungu and the nobles of Ngonde than it would be, say, through a committee of commoners chosen for their personal ability; for the successors of the traditional rulers still have a status in Ngonde which is continuous, though not identical with that of the past.

178 Christianity has gained a great hold on Ngonde,[1] and has helped to
771 undermine the old pagan faith even among those who do not profess it.
797 And the whole hierarchically organized system of pagan ritual is almost dead. A few days after our arrival in Ngonde, in July 1937, the nobles of Ngonde organized the clearing out of the ashes, for a special purpose. A bad plague of rats had appeared in the country and an old woman had announced prophetically that it was due to the anger of the spirits. Mulwa did all the organizing, for, as he said to us: "The present Kyungu renounced all interest in these things years ago and told me to manage without him. So I went and told Kalonga and Mwakasungula and Mwenengubwe, who is the senior of the chiefs of Ngana; it is their business to tell their juniors." But of the hundred odd chiefs and nobles in the Ngonde plain only four chiefs and a few nobles responded to the summons to put out their old fires and to bring the ashes to Kyimbwe. How many commoners put out their fires I do not know, for we did not hear of the ritual until it was over. Even this, however, was an exceptional occasion and the regular yearly performance of the ritual has ceased. Neither is the old first-fruit ritual any longer performed.

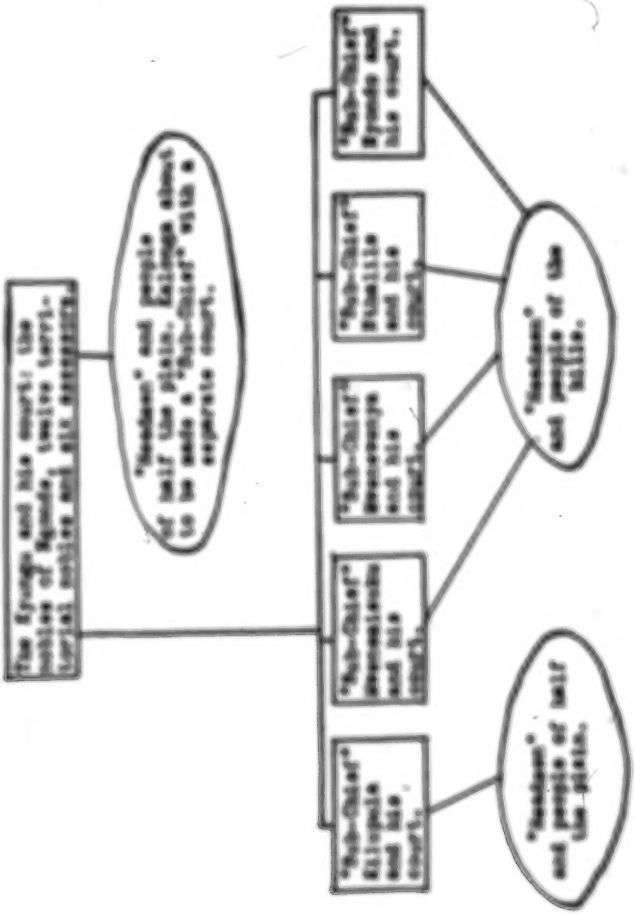
The Scots Mission in Ngonde concentrated from the first on the conversion and education of the sons of leading men, so that now many of the rulers themselves are either Christians or ex-Christians. The present Kyungu was, as we have seen, a Christian, and, though he has

[1] 45% of the population profess Christianity.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-:1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

642.

THE CONSTITUTION OF NGONDE IN 1937


The Kyungu and his court: the holder of Ngonde, twelve territorial nobles and all descendants.
'Headmen' and people of half the plain, Lufingo about to be made a 'Sub-Chief' with a separate court.
'Sub-Chief' Kisopia and his court.
'Sub-Chief' Mwamisenga and his court.
'Sub-Chief' Mwaseneya and his court.
'Sub-Chief' Mwalilo and his court.
'Sub-Chief' Kyondo and his court.
'Headmen' and people of the hills.
'Headmen' and people of half the plain.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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now abandoned his Christianity and taken a number of wives, he appears to be wholly sceptical of pagan beliefs. "It is I who have killed the custom of praying in the sacred groves," he told us, "for my brother, Mwangalaba, used to give the nobles of Ngonde cattle for sacrifice; but I have never once given them a beast, nor do I give them hens, nor beer, nor flour." He subsequently admitted, however, that he did sometimes give them "a few pence" to buy a hen for sacrifice. Many of the old magical taboos he certainly no longer observes and we have no evidence that he observes any; while the magical possessions of his predecessors are mostly lost.

That the old beliefs survive in the minds of many men in Ngonde, both pagan and Christian, we have certain evidence; but upon those beliefs little public action is now taken. The profession of Christianity is normal among the younger people, and their attitude to the ritual which occurred during our visit was one of amusement. And even the belief in witchcraft, which has proved in many parts of Africa to be most persistent, is beginning in Ngonde to be publicly called in question by some of the pagans themselves.[1]

178 771

The present Native rulers of Ngonde are thus no longer generally believed to control the destinies of their people; rain, health and fertility are no longer in their gift. And this brings radical changes into all political relationships. It is by their secular functions alone that the present Native rulers stand or fall. The hoeing of the public gardens of the Kyungu by his people, for instance, was largely kept up in former times because of his rain-making powers; he gave them rain, they gave him service. But, if he is now still able to claim this service from them, it is because he gives them other things than rain.[2]

178 642 771

Then again the decline of the old beliefs inevitably alters the balance of power between the different political authorities. The Kyungu is no longer a magical object carefully secluded and controlled by the nobles of Ngonde; and so he now rules his people in person. It is he himself who now takes all the major decisions, within the sphere of responsibility allowed him by the Government. The nobles of Ngonde are reduced to a merely advisory status. While the decline of the old theistic and witchcraft beliefs brings a similar change into the relations of every chief with his great-commoners. Many chiefs in Ngonde still fear that they will fall ill if they offend their great-commoners, but some do not,[3] and it

[1] The same cannot be said of the Nyakyusa, among whom, for various reasons, the missions have made far fewer converts in proportion to the total population. Among the Nyakyusa the old rituals and beliefs are still very much alive.

[2] *Vide infra* p. 80

[3] One of the chiefs, for example, is an ordained minister of the Church of Central Africa (Presbyterian).

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

is generally admitted that all chiefs are less affected by this fear than they used to be. The secularization of the constitution tends, in this connection, to make it more autocratic.

On the economic side it is difficult to exaggerate the change in the relative wealth of rulers and people. The change is temporarily obscured by the historical accident of the present Kyungu's personal fortune, but this, when he dies, will go to this own heir, not to his successor in the Kyungulship. The Kyungu's total official salary in 1937 was £72 a year and those of the "Sub-chiefs" varied from about £4 10s. to £12 a year. The nobles of Ngonde all received either 10s. or 15s. a year, with the exception of Mulwa who received 30s. These salaries, which are paid out of the Native Treasurery, are the modern substitute for the profits of the ivory-trade, which the Kyungu shared with his subordinates, together with the regular tribute of food and the proceeds of tribal warfare and of punitive expeditions, all of which sources of income have now dried up. And these salaries do not make possible the giving of any valuable gifts to subordinates and subjects. The local rulers also receive slight financial subsidies from the Native Treasury. Each "Village Headman" is allowed to retain 3d. from the tax of every adult male subject of his own and the "Important Headmen" (great chiefs) receive in addition subsidies ranging from 3s. to 40s. a year. This custom has replaced that of the requisitioning of food; but, owing to the smallness of all the present chiefdoms and fiefs of the plain, few "Village Headmen" receive more than £1 a year from this source.[1]

It is open to commoners, on the other hand, to become as rich or richer than most of their rulers. The head clerk in the Boma in 1937 received £32 a year, and there were fifty-three other Government employees who all received £12 or over; Native Christian Ministers and Evangelists all received many times the salary of Mulwa while young men often returned from the Lupa gold-fields with savings of several pounds.

The decline of polygyny in Ngonde again reduces the relative wealth of the subordinate chiefs and nobles in comparison with their people. Women are increasingly reluctant, for various reasons, to be married by polygynists, and the old style of entertainment is changing. Few chiefs and nobles, save the present Kyungu himself, now have sufficient wives and unmarried children to be able to entertain on a large scale. In the case of ordinary chiefs and territorial nobles (the "Village Headmen" of to-day) this poverty is not in itself very significant, for with the dwindling

[1] The average receipts of the one hundred and twenty-four "Village Headmen" in the Ngonde plain were almost exactly 10/- per annum in 1936. They had, that is, an average of forty tax-payers each.

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

178 565 in size of the groups they rule, they have fewer subjects to entertain. But the "Sub-chiefs" and the "Important Headmen" cannot cease to entertain largely without losing much of their pre-eminent status.

178 692 The outlawing by Government of civil and tribal war, combined with the new economic and religious conditions, has enormously extended the normal range of social relationships among the people of Ngonde; and a centralised judicial system has necessarily been developed to deal with the new situation. The old forms of local autonomy have ceased.

178 642 The continuity which is observable between the present constitution of Ngonde and that of the middle period is mainly determined by three factors. In the first place the Government of the Protectorate deliberately supports in positions of high authority the legitimate successors of some of the old rulers. In the second place the judicial functions of these successors, which have been greatly extended, have replaced, to some extent, the old religious and military functions. And, in the third place, the present Kyungu is, as it happens, a rich man. A decentralised mercantile divinity has been transformed into a centralised Native Authority with some continuity of personnel, with the substitution of new functions for old and with the assistance of a private fortune.

(b) *FROM GOD TO MAGISTRATE.*

178 692 The first two of these factors of continuity—Government support and the increase of judicial functions—must be discussed together, for it is mainly because of their utility as subordinate magistrates that the Government supports the Native rulers of Ngonde.

Modern conditions, in the sphere of law, bring about two great changes. Firstly the integration of the one-time primitive society of Ngonde with the civilised world greatly increases the range of social relationships among its people, and so renders ineffective much of the traditional legal machinery. And, secondly, the introduction of Christianity, of political control by the British and of European economic enterprise inevitably changes the content of the law. Granted the general conditions of contact between Africans and Europeans in Central Africa a transformation of all its traditional legal systems is seen to be an inescapable necessity.

Common law must now be maintained by a hierarchy of legal authorities reaching far beyond the boundaries of Ngonde, if it is to be maintained among its people at all. As I write these words in Livingstonia, a thousand miles by road from Mbande, there is a man of Ngonde working in a shop within a hundred yards of my office. While in Ngonde itself it is no longer true that a man's friends and neighbours, or even his immediate rulers, can ever be sure of constraining him effectively if he

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

Owing to the accident of Peter's private fortune the elements which tend to make the present constitution of Ngonde more autocratic and more centralized than the old are, in his case alone, uncounteracted by the element of poverty. And his secular power is thus far greater in Ngonde than that of his predecessors. The nobles of Ngonde have lost the old religious holds over him, most of the subordinate rulers have lost their judicial functions, he alone is considerably richer than the common people.

Personal links between rulers, subordinates and subjects are not only characteristic of primitive societies. In our own society these links normally take the form of entertainment: The King, cabinet ministers, colonial governors, and the mayors of towns entertain the leading citizens, and their position in part depends upon doing so. And it is thus probable that personal economic links will still be necessary in the Ngonde of the future, when its integration with world society is more complete. Their form may change, but wealth will still have to be expended on their maintenance. Now there are only two ways of securing that such links will be maintained: either special allowances must be paid to the Native rulers of Ngonde as they are paid to European rulers, to enable them to keep up their position in this way, or else rich men of public spirit must be found to fill these offices. The second solution depends upon the existence of rich men and the constitutional possibility of giving them office; but it is very unlikely indeed that, in the near future, other Peters will be available, who combine wealth both with royal blood and the general eligibility for which the nobles look. Moreover it is worth noting here that quite soon the majority of the Native rulers of Ngonde will probably be Christian monogamists and the old economic resources of polygynous marriage will then no longer exist for them at all. The first solution, however, always remains practicable.

(4) CONSTITUTIONAL LAW.

It is generally accepted in Ngonde to-day that all future Kyungus should be taken from the one house of Mwakasungula and all the three Kyungus since the deposition of Mwakolambo have been members of it. The nobles of Ngonde insist that the chiefs of Ngana were only taken in the middle period *facie de mieux*, when either no suitable chiefs of the Ngelenge line could be found, or it seemed to be dwindling dangerously under the onslaughts of the Ngoni. And the chiefs of Ngana accept this fact. Why the house of Mwambelo has fallen out of the succession I am not sure, but, as the house of Mwakasungula is now very numerous, I suppose it is not considered necessary to look beyond it.

But still the principle obtains of election within the house. From

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

Mwenengubwe, has attained more or less the status of a great chief; but his country originally belonged to the noble Mwenelupembe. One of the Kajunis married a daughter of Mwenelupembe and, in the usual way, became the effective ruler of most of the country. But the position was not formally clarified, Kajuni and Mwenelupembe are said to have lived on the best of terms, "and there was no boundary between them." After the arrival of the Europeans Kajuni was recorded in the Government list as the "Headman," for taxation purposes, with the consent of Mwenelupembe. And this meant that Mwenelupembe received no share of the tax money. But then, recently, Kajuni sold some of their land to a European for a tobacco shamba without consulting Mwenelupembe, who was furious, and demanded his own tax register and to have a boundary formally marked out between them. And this has now been done. The present cash value of the status of a ruler has altered the economics of the situation, the decline of the religious status of Mbande lessens the comparative importance of the royal blood, while new occasions of dispute between the rulers are now present.

The "coming out" (*wuruka*) has ceased in Ngonde owing to the smallness of all the present chiefdoms, both in area and numbers, and the impossibility of finding sufficient land and followers for two successors to any local chief.[1] There has been no "coming out" since 1913. Each local chief is now succeeded by one younger full-brother (or one son) alone. But still among these "Village Headmen" popular favour determines their position. If his subjects do not like a "Headman" they move away to his neighbours, and every emigration reduces his salary by 3d. a year.

(c) CONCLUSION.

Now the more autocratic form and the greater centralization of the modern constitution of Ngonde is very largely the product of inevitable social forces. Granted the general conditions of contact between Africans and Europeans in Central Africa, a decline of the religion of Ngonde, with the consequential change in the relations of chiefs with their leading commoners, could not possibly be avoided. Nor could the old local autonomy possibly be fitted in unchanged to any modern administrative system. And Ngonde is not unique in this, similar changes, equally inevitable, can be seen in most areas of Central Africa.

Nor is the relative poverty of the majority of the Native rulers of Ngonde today a unique phenomenon either. Richards[2] has shown the

[1] Owing to the climatic difference local succession in Ngonde does not run as among the Nyakyusa; but the implications of this fact we did not specially study.
[2] *op. cit.*

6:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17

178 642 same thing among the Bemba and Read among the Ngoni ;[1] and it is, in fact, the wealth of Peter which is unusual. Wealth and chieftainship are no longer normally synonymous terms as they were in the old days ; and this again is largely the result of the operation of inevitable forces.

And wherever an increase of centralization and of autocracy is combined with a decrease of the relative wealth of the Native rulers there the modern constitutions of Central Africa must inevitably become very difficult and, in the end, impossible to work. For a central political power cannot be effectively exercized unless it includes the control of wealth ; nor can able and wealthy commoners be permanently barred from sharing it.

But the policies of the Government, backed by the overwhelming power and wealth at their command, are themselves social forces which, while they cannot prevent the other forces from operating, can counterbalance them. No Government, for instance, can maintain the old tribal religions in being against the forces making for their decay, nor can it now restore the old sources of wealth to the chiefs, nor can it prevent some commoners from becoming wealthy men, nor can it bring back the old small-scale, isolated, relatively autonomous, local communities. But it is possible for a Government to raise the salaries of chiefs and their advisers and deliberately to encourage new forms of local representation and popular control. It is possible ; but whether it is desirable a scientist cannot say.

[1] Margaret Read Native Standards of Living and Culture Change. Supplement to *Africa*. 1938.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Kinga FN12

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE peoples with whom this book is concerned, the Nyakyusa and the Ngonde, occupy an area shut in by mountains at the northern end of Lake Nyasa, and enjoy a culture which, though varying locally, clearly springs from a common basis and is traditionally attributed to similar origins. The most conspicuous features of their political organization are (i) the balance of power between chiefs and commoners; (ii) the 'coming out' ritual in which a generation of men which has governed for approximately thirty years retires and hands over the administration to its sons, retaining only ritual functions; and (iii) the system of age-villages.

All are agreed that chiefs and commoners belong to different stocks; the commoners being descended from the original occupants of the country while the chiefs trace their descent to a line of invaders who came down from the Livingstone mountains eight generations ago. According to the myth, they brought with them fire, and cattle, and iron tools, and they found a people who ate their food raw in a land 'without trees'.[1] Commoners are *abatitu*, black people, while Ngulube, an early ancestor of the chiefs, was 'pale'[2] and chiefs (*abanyafyale*) generally are said to have been lighter in colour and 'different in their bodies'. After generations of intermarriage between chiefs and commoners there is no consistent difference in physical type between them, but the range of physical type among the Nyakyusa as a whole is wide.[3]

Nyakyusa and Ngonde historians say that their chiefs are related to those of the Kinga, who live high above the Nyakyusa valley to the east in the Livingstone mountains, whence the chiefs came. The Kinga acknowledge the connexion and join with the Nyakyusa in sacrifice to their common heroes, but culturally the

[1] Possibly the lake-shore plain. The hills until cultivated are covered with either savannah or rain forest.

[2] Godfrey Wilson, *The Constitution of Ngonde*, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 3, p. 10 (1939). According to the Ngonde version Ngulube was the *first* ancestor.

[3] cf. F. Fülleborn, *Beiträge zur physischen Anthropologie der Nord-Nyassaländer* (1906). *Das Deutsche Nyassa- und Ruwuma-Gebiet Atlas* (1906).

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'Lwembe listens to him'. 'If Kinga messengers went [to Lubaga] without going through Mwakalukwa's country there would be much hunger. . . . Once Mwemusi and Kyelela [Kinga chiefs] conspired together and sent off men with hoes to Lubaga, without reference to Mwakalukwa. They carried ten hoes. But when they got back disease killed many in the country, and they paid Mwakalukwa and did not do it again.'

It is true that an independent Nyakyusa chief *can* send an offering to Lubaga on his own; it is received by the priests of Lubaga and sacrificed in the grove, and such a sacrifice is held to be in some measure efficient, but drought or sickness in the country as a whole is often attributed to one or other of the participating groups failing to play their part. Moreover, such a failure is thought to be dangerous to the chief or priest who neglects his duties, as we shall see in the case of Kasitile.

The priests of Lubaga ministered to the Lwembe but they had also the right and duty of admonishing him if he did wrong, just as village headmen have the right and duty of admonishing their chief. If the Lwembe broke a taboo 'then Kissoule and the other priests would be very angry and reproach him for bathing and making hunger, and he would pay them a bull in recompense.' Even the 'divine king' was subject to the rule of law. All through the political organization and ritual patterns of the Nyakyusa there is this balance and reciprocity between chiefs and commoners and it is here that the Nyakyusa system differs radically from that described by Professor Frankfort for ancient Egypt.[1] The heroes had brought the gift of chieftainship to the Nyakyusa but it had not ousted another, perhaps older, tradition of democratic leadership; instead, the two were welded in a partnership which, to the Nyakyusa, is so much part of the necessary order of the universe that they speak of commoner priests and headmen as 'wives' of the chiefs. The Kissoule in office is 'the wife' of the Lwembe.

In the grove at Lubaga sacrifices of black cattle and sheep and libations of millet beer were offered by the Nyakyusa, while the Kinga brought hoes, bamboo beer, salt, the sacred drum *ngoma*, and *ifita*, that is, marvels whose nature, Kasitile averred, he did not know himself. The shrine of Lubaga, and the actors and actions connected with it, are miraculous and terrible, terrible even to the actors themselves who tremble when they enter the grove, and

[1] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (1948), pp. 51-6.

631 628 Age-villages combined to form a chiefdom under the hereditary chief, *amalaf'yale*, but active co-operation between villages thus associated was often slight; indeed in the larger chiefdoms there commonly existed intermittent animosity which might break out in raiding or even civil war. The integrity of these larger chiefdoms was weak – for example, when the [721] [848] Nyakyusa were attacked by Sangu and Ngoni war-parties, and later by the Germans, villages of the same chiefdom conspicuously failed to join in common defence. Similarly the land affairs of one village were no concern of any other, and each jealously guarded its own rights.

631 162 None of the chiefdoms was large; smallness of scale is typical of Nyakyusa political organisation and social attitudes. In 1955 the smallest indigenous chiefdom contained only 36 men. In 1948 55,700 people were divided amongst about 18 indigenous chiefs, but undoubtedly had not the Colonial Government frozen the system there would have been rather more – at least five more. Today there are 12 recognised "administrative chiefs", amongst whom five have each less than 3,000 people under them, and the largest chiefdom contains fewer than 10,000 people – the average is just over 4,000 people.

631 361 Nevertheless the chiefdom, the collection of villages, was important, because in the creation of the chiefdom villages were created, and in its development the villages developed, matured and died away. A village survived only so long as its members lived and by the nature of the age-organisation there was but little possibility of the recruitment of new members, for villagers' sons left to form their own new villages. Their sons eventually came to comprise the core of the new chiefdoms.

642 643 [796] [498] In connection with the constitution of a Nyakyusa village and with land tenure, the significant feature of the chiefdom was its establishment, together with the induction of a new chief, at the great "coming-out" ceremony, *ubusoka*. In brief, each chief was succeeded by two of his sons – the eldest son of each of the senior houses of the chief, i.e., of his first two wives. At the "coming-out" ceremony, when the sons were still young men and their father was not a particularly old man, the old chiefdom was divided into two, each part coming under one of the new young chiefs. Before this critical occasion – at which much important ritual was performed – the younger men of the old chiefdom had already moved away from their fathers villages and had established their own incipient villages nearby, each one containing a group of coevals. A Nyakyusa boy from the age of about seven years could not continue to live with his father and mother, but, in company with his equals, built his own hut on a site adjacent to the main village as indicated by the fathers' headman. Until the "coming-out" ceremony these youths' villages came under the control of the old village headmen; but with the induction of the new chiefs they achieved independent status, each with its own headman appointed from among its members by the old headmen. Each new village was allocated a new building site and a new arable area, and quite commonly the old villages, the older men, moved away a little in order to give the younger men adequate access to the land, for it was considered that the young men's needs for land were paramount.

621 [342] 631 [178] [622] After this wholesale reorganisation of the old chiefdom, when new villages were established and new boundaries demarcated,[1] the old chief himself, the old headmen and the older men (the "fathers") gradually retired from active public life. The old chief was supposed to commit suicide after a time (or was quietly killed off) in order to leave the field clear for his sons; the old headmen became the religious and ritual leaders of the new chiefdoms, with the flavour of elder statesmanship, and the old men's

643 [888]

1. "At the "coming-out" it is said that "everything is upside down", boundaries are redrawn and the new chiefdoms and villages of the young men are somewhat hastily incorporated". Wilson, G., 1938, p. 31.